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[pp. I–X CONTAIN NO TEXT]

Preface

IN writing the following pages, we are very conscious of the help we have received from many sources, for which we express our heartiest thanks.

First and foremost, we remember our many Tibetan friends who, by allowing us to enter their homes and to watch them at their work and play, have enabled us to learn much about their inner life. We bear in particular remembrance our two Ladaki friends, Nyenpo Joseph Gergan and Nyenpo Dawazung Dana, who so willingly put at our disposal their profound knowledge of their own country, its history and customs.

Without reference to Dr. A. H. Franke's historical researches our second chapter could not have been written. To him we also owe the two stories of Dardish heroes; and Colonel Waddell's "Lamaism" is a store of information.

We have further to mention some other friends, Mr. Basil Crump and Mrs. A. C. Cleather, whose knowledge of Buddhism is so profound. They have often shown us the significance of things not realized before, while Mr. Crump has most generously allowed us to draw on his splendid collection of photographs. Our gratitude is due also to Major Robson, I.A., a former British Joint Commissioner, and to Miss Lucy McCormick, for so very kindly allowing us to make use of some of their photographs.

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/1/ INTRODUCTION

I

The Mythology of the Tibetan Saga World

The Bon religion is usually regarded as the pre-Buddhistic religion of the Tibetans. We find the ideas of this religion expressed in a great many documents to be met with among the Bonpo, who even today are still settled in certain parts of Tibet. Only very little has been translated into European languages from these books. But from what has been presented in translation, it is apparent that the Bon religion has by no means the characteristics of a primitive culture. Rather, it appears as a mixture of ancient Tibetan ideas with materials borrowed from Hinduism and from Buddhism.

To me the folklore of the country proved to be a much richer mine of information about the pre-Buddhistic religious system of the Tibetans. In this field, three groups were especially fruitful. These were the Kesar saga (the national epic of the country), the exchange songs at weddings, and the hymns called Glin-glu, which are sung at the spring festival.

I. Let us first consider the Kesar saga. Its central figure is King Kesar. (In the West this name is clearly pronounced Ke-sar, or even Kye-sar; in the East it is known in the corrupt form Ge-sar. In a similar manner the word Kyir-mo, meaning a round coin, a rupee, has become Gir-mo.) Europeans first became acquainted with this saga in its Mongolian version through the translations (1) by B. Bergmann

1. B. Bergmann, Nomadische Streifereien unter den Kalmüken. --I. J. Schmidt, Die Taten Bogda-Gesser-Chans, Petersburg, 1839. Gesar had already been mentioned earlier, by Pallas in his Reise durch verschiedene Provinzen des russischen Reiches.

and I. J. Schmidt. Schmidt's translation was done from a Mongolian edition prepared in 1716 in Peking at the command of the Emperor Kanghi. The work is entitled: Die Taten Bogda-Gesser-Chans. As Schmidt reports, Gesser-Chan is highly revered also among the

585 While I was occupied with the study of these songs, I was told
• 127 that an ancient manuscript containing the wedding songs existed in
539 Tag-ma-cig, the neighboring village to the west of Khalatse. I immediately sent a messenger to that village in order to have the work delivered to me, but I was to learn that this could only be done in exchange for the payment of a fairly large sum of money. After this payment had been made, the manuscript was left with me for a month on a loan basis. This period of time was sufficient, however, for my faithful assistant, Ye-shes-rig-adzin, to copy the entire document. Unfortunately, the manuscript was so badly damaged in some places that several songs had to be left incomplete. Concerning the age of the manuscript nothing definite could be established. It was reported to me that they had begun writing them down only when there was danger that the old songs might be forgotten. The manuscript may perhaps be one hundred years old, and possibly a little more. According to my scribe's count, the booklet contains about sixty songs, mostly consisting of two parts. Quite a number of these correspond with the songs of Khalatse, and, in fact, there are repetitions both of the individual wedding songs
[533] and of the drinking songs. We observe that in Tag-ma-cig they did not differentiate at all between wedding songs and drinking songs. Yet the title of the entire collection is "Nyo-pas-sgo-la btan-ces-kyi-glu," "Songs of the Nyopa (Bride Buyers), To Be Sung at the Door." Even though at the time I was unable to understand much of the content of the songs, I nevertheless recognized immediately their extreme importance in the study of pre-Buddhistic religion, and I wished to make them accessible to the scholarly world. For this reason I had them multigraphed in twenty-eight copies with blue copy ink, but in this job I was quite unlucky. The impressions were for the most part so faint that they could not be deciphered. Fortunately, the copy made by Ye-shes-rig-adzin has been found again in the meantime and important data have been taken from it,
585 which will appear in the following pages. All these wedding songs
773 are particularly valuable because they contain a great deal of ma-
539 terial dealing with the Tibetan notions about the World Tree and the deities of the four points of the heavens. Later I was also supplied with wedding songs (nyo-pai-glu) from the villages of Shel and Phyi-dban. These are of a totally different nature, however. They are songs of praise addressed to kings and ministers who apparently celebrated their weddings in those localities. For the student of religion they are of no value.

III. The Hymns of the Spring Festival (Glin-glu). When the spring festival is celebrated in Western Tibet (Ladakh, and so on), hymns are sung which bear the name Glin-glu, "Songs from the Land of Glin." In these hymns King Kesar and the deities mentioned in the Kesar saga are honored. Without a certain knowledge of the Kesar saga, these songs would remain unintelligible. Without exerting myself particularly, I managed to get my hands on two such hymn collections as I was looking around for folk songs. From the village Phyi-dban, eight English miles below Leh, I obtained a manuscript prepared there, which contained the nine hymns of the Kesar festival that are customarily used in that village. In Khalatse, Ye-shes-rig-adzin, who has already been mentioned above, wrote down for me the nine hymns that were sung there. I published the first collection in the Indian Antiquary in 1901, with text, English translation, and notes. The second collection is to be found in my "Ladakhi Songs," where it is printed under Nos. XXI-XXIX. These two important collections are accompanied by a briefer third one, consisting of five festival songs which a member of the Bheda caste in the village of Sheh (Shel) wrote down for me, songs traditional in that village. In addition, I should mention that scattered parts of such festival songs are also to be found here and there in my collections of folk songs, just as here and there some wedding songs are to be found taken out of their context. /5/ Such a one is to be found, for instance, in Ladakhi Songs, No. 30, "The Carpet of the Bride Buyers."

IV. Now, after the main sources of the Glin-chos have been established, I must speak of yet a fourth type of songs of a religious nature which, however, do not seem to fit into the framework of the Glin-chos. I published one of these in my Ladakhi Songs as No. 15. But this is not a happy example, since it is composed of two wedding songs, whereas the original song has been lost. Better types are afforded by my as yet unpublished collection of songs from Sheh. From this collection it appears that as a theme for the harvest songs they chose the creation of the world and the origin of the gifts of nature, in particular, wheat. But the myth of the creation of the world, as we find it here, is in contrast to the version in the Kesar saga. In the harvest song the earth rises up out of the waters of the ocean, while in the Kesar saga it is formed out of the body of a slain giant. Now the myth in the harvest songs of Sheh (Shel) corresponds in a curious way with the Dard song about the creation of the world, such as we find it written down in the Dard collection of hymns of

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temporarily married after having converted themselves to the Islamic religion, as their husbands desired. This I understood to be the origin of the Argons.

It will not always be possible when giving an account of the data collected in Leh concerning polyandry to quote, every time, as I have done before, the date and site because much time was spent travelling about with the informants, conversing with them and gathering pieces of information in an informal, non-systematic fashion. This appeared to be the best way in Ladak to gain their confidence and to obtain as much as possible from them. Then also, writings concerning polyandry in this part of the world were available in Leh, either in the Residence of the British Assistant Resident where I stayed, or from the Moravian Mission and from my two principal Christian informants, Joseph Gergan and Nono Tseten P'hüntzok. The names of these works are listed in the accompanying Bibliography.

Since I already knew something about Tibetan polyandry from my observations in Lahul, as described above, I was able, in Leh, to go straight into the subject and to proceed along comparative lines rather than merely to explore unfamiliar fields in which I endeavoured to make discoveries. Thus I was able to find out immediately that the Ladaki type of polyandry was, in essentials, the same as that of Lahul, namely that the holding or house was the pivot, the axis around which it revolved.

The inhabitants of Ladak, having this in common with all people of Tibetan cultural affinity, are also loth to divide up the family property and to see its name die out. Consequently they resort to the same matrimonial and inheritance safeguards as we had seen at work in Lahul: polyandry and either patrilineal or matrilineal succesion, depending upon whether there are male or only female heirs.

I very quickly discovered from my informants that the two big differences from what I had seen before were that, in Ladak, a rule of primogeniture existed by which only the eldest inherited all the property, and that fields were not divided up among brothers, but all belonged to the eldest one alone. I noted that it brought the system of tax collection much more into line with actual ownership for, as I have said, the head of the family unit is responsible, under the Kashmir administration, for the revenue to be gathered from the holding. In other words, the proprietor himself is answerable, and not a number of persons, usually brothers, as they are in Lahul.

If there are boys in a family, it is the eldest son who inherits the